



The Status of Immigrants in Dakota County

A report of the Dakota County Human Services Advisory Committee

February 11, 2003

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Executive Summary

The United States is a nation of immigrants. Most Americans trace their heritages to other parts of the globe. It would make sense for us to have an affinity for immigrants. But Americans have always been of two minds about immigrants: we like the idea of immigrants succeeding in our country, but we also worry that they don't look like us or that they might cost us money and take our jobs. Now we have new worries about immigrants – are they terrorists? In this large, open country, can we know what they are up to? Can we control our borders?

These national security issues aside, immigration is here, and is here to stay. The 2000 U.S. Census confirmed what all of us have noticed: that number of immigrants living in this country is larger now than at any time in the past. Further, immigrants now make up about 10% of the country's population – close to the record percentages of 100 years ago. While Minnesota's numbers are smaller, they have still grown dramatically. And it isn't just the numbers that are hard to ignore. Whereas 19th and early 20th century immigrants in Minnesota were mainly from northern and western Europe – and looked a lot like people already here -- today's immigrants are from Africa, Asia and eastern Europe. They bring new languages, foods, and customs to schools, businesses, places of worship, and public life. They bring

opportunities and challenges for which many of us are ill prepared.

The Dakota County Human Services Advisory Committee (HSAC) decided to consider how today's immigrants are faring in Dakota County. HSAC also looked at whether there is a role for the county in helping our communities meet the challenges and take advantage of the opportunities posed by immigrants. As HSAC heard during its study, immigration is an agent of change. Immigrants assimilate and modify their habits, to be sure – and so do the rest of us as we appropriate some parts of these cultures into American culture. Immigration is not a problem, as some would have us believe. Rather it is a feature of American life. The trick is to find ways to use it to make life better, more compassionate, and more interesting.

HSAC's work on the status of immigrants in Dakota County included consultation with experts from the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), the University of Minnesota's Immigration History Resource Library, and non-governmental agencies. HSAC found:

- The term "immigrant" is best thought of as synonymous with foreign-born resident. "Immigrant" describes anyone born in another country who intends to live here permanently, whether here legally or illegally. Refugees make up a

sub-category of immigrants. Refugees must be part of a group formally recognized by the United Nations as reasonably fearing persecution based on race, religion, nationality, or political opinion.

- Most immigrants come to this country to be with family members who have already established themselves here. Many recent immigrants have come to Dakota County in search of better schools, housing and neighborhoods for their children.
- There are approximately 18,000 foreign-born residents in Dakota County according to the 2000 Census. Foreign-born residents make up about five percent of the county's population, comparable to that of the rest of Minnesota, but only about half the proportion of the rest of the country.

For the first time, HSAC spent time in the field, meeting with representatives of four of the largest and most visible immigrant communities in Dakota County: Somalis, Lao/Cambodian, Latinos, and the former Soviet Union. From these sessions, HSAC concludes that these are the major concerns for immigrants:

1. Limited ability to speak and read English which in turn isolates individuals and families, and limits immigrants job, school, and other opportunities.

2. Putting one foot in front of the other – getting started in Dakota County, from finding a place to live to finding schools for children.
3. Fear and mistrust of authority and government based in large part on experience with militia or police in immigrants' disrupted homelands.
4. Difficulty trying to reconcile old world parenting with new world adolescent realities. Also, finding ways to work with schools.
5. Dealing with mental health problems.
6. Dealing with racism and xenophobia.

HSAC was impressed with the strengths that immigrants bring to Dakota County:

- Communities that are highly networked, with recognizable leaders so that word spreads quickly.
- Traditions of mutual aid.
- Risk takers, especially in the first waves of immigrants; many are highly educated.

HSAC recommends that Dakota County
Community Services:

1. Support efforts to increase English proficiency with classes that focus on normal activities of daily living.
2. Continue to invest in staff language competency.
3. Help immigrants establish themselves once they move to Dakota County through collaborative efforts with advocacy groups and local service organizations such as:
 - Sponsoring targeted English proficiency classes
 - Working with several immigrant-owned small business start ups
 - Producing a “Ways to Get Established When You Move to Dakota County” guide for immigrants that covers a range of tasks, from setting up households to getting jobs.
4. Take advantage of opened lines of communication by having county officials, senior Community Services staff, and key partners (schools, cities, businesses, non-profit groups) meet with immigrant communities’ leaders to talk about mutual interests, including: fear/mistrust of government, parenting/discipline issues as they relate to child welfare, and making systems (education, health care, and others)

work for immigrants. By taking the time to establish and maintain ties, Dakota County Community Services could prevent conflicts/ misunderstandings, and could help solve problems. HSAC believes that Extension Services, with its experience in convening groups around community concerns, should be tapped to lead this effort.

This was a new kind of study for HSAC because it began not with a problem but as an open-ended question: What is the status of immigrants in Dakota County? HSAC was able to answer many parts of the question. The important thing, HSAC believes, is not that the question was answered, but that it was asked at all.

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I N T R O D U C T I O N

“...Give me your tired, your poor,

Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free, the
wretched refuse of your teeming shore.

Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me, I lift
my lamp beside the golden door!”

Emma Lazarus’ “The New Colossus,” inscribed on the base of the Statue of Liberty, paints a romantic picture of America welcoming immigrants. But does her 19th century poem reflect the reality of immigration in the 21st century?

The United States is, of course, a nation of immigrants. Most Americans trace their heritages to other parts of the globe. It would make sense for us to have an affinity for immigrants. But Americans have always been of two minds about immigrants: we like the idea of immigrants succeeding in our country, but we also worry that they don’t look like us or that they might cost us money and take our jobs. Now we have new worries about immigrants – are they terrorists? In this large, open country, can we know what they are up to? Can we control our borders?

These national security issues aside, immigration is here, and is here to stay. The 2000 U.S. Census confirmed what all of us have noticed: that the number of immigrants living in this country is larger now than at any time in the past. Further, immigrants now make up about 11% of the country’s population – just below the record percentages of 13-14% of 100 years ago. While Minnesota’s numbers are smaller, they have still grown dramatically. And it isn’t just the numbers that are hard to ignore.

Whereas in the 19th and early 20th centuries, immigrants in Minnesota were mainly from northern and western Europe – and looked a lot like people already here --today's immigrants are mainly from Africa, Asia and eastern Europe. They bring new languages, foods, and customs to schools, businesses, places of worship, and public life. They bring opportunities and challenges for which many of us are ill prepared.

The Dakota County Human Services Advisory Committee (HSAC) is a 21-member group of citizens appointed by the Dakota County Board of Commissioners to advise the Board on human services issues. HSAC decided to consider how today's immigrants are faring in Dakota County. HSAC also looked at whether there is a role for the county in helping communities meet the challenges and take advantage of the opportunities presented by immigrants. As HSAC heard during its study, immigration is an agent of change. Immigrants assimilate and modify their habits, to be sure – and so do the rest of us as we appropriate some parts of these cultures into American culture. Immigration is not a problem, as some would have us believe. Rather, it is a feature of American life. The trick is to find ways to use immigration to make life better, more compassionate, and more interesting.

This report summarizes HSAC's work. It includes basic factual information about immigration and immigrants from the 2000 U.S. Census, the Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning, and other sources. As it usually does in its studies, HSAC consulted with experts, including

representatives of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), the University of Minnesota's Immigration History Research Center, and non-governmental agencies. The real experts in immigration are immigrants themselves, so HSAC also met with representatives of four of the largest and most visible immigrant communities in Dakota County: Somali, Lao/Cambodian, Latino, and the former Soviet Union. It was sessions with immigrants that yielded the richest information of all for the study.

HSAC was aware of the potential limitations of the project, including the fact that immigration is a federal government responsibility, that local government's role is officially limited. However, HSAC members also know that local governments have frequent contact with immigrants on a variety of topics.

HSAC could have pursued myriad directions with this study, but chose to limit it to:

- 1) Traditional human services (Social Services, Employment and Economic Assistance, Public Health, and Extension Services); and
- 2) to lower income immigrants struggling to make their ways.

HSAC hopes the product is useful to Dakota County as it continues to develop proactive approaches toward engaging immigrant communities.

The Study Process Described

Dakota County's HSAC met monthly from March through November 2002 on this topic. The study had three phases:

- Phase I: Facts About Immigration

During the first phase of the study, HSAC heard from experts on a variety of topics including federal immigration policy, refugee resettlement, reasons people immigrate to the United States and Minnesota, the history of immigration in Minnesota, and immigrant demographics. In this phase, HSAC explored seven key questions:

1. How are immigrants defined?
2. How many immigrants live in Dakota County?
3. Where do immigrants live in Dakota County?
4. Why do immigrants come to Minnesota and Dakota County?
5. Do immigrants use a disproportionate amount of public resources?
6. Do immigrants take jobs away from American citizens?
7. What does Dakota County do for immigrants already?

- Phase II: Faces of Immigrants

During the second phase of the study, HSAC met with members of some of Dakota County's immigrant communities. These meetings allowed HSAC to talk face-to-face to residents from Somalia, Mexico, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, and Russia shared their stories, described the strengths of their communities, talked about their concerns, and came up with suggestions for making Dakota County a better place for foreign-born residents. HSAC's key questions in this phase were:

1. What are the major challenges facing immigrants?
2. What are immigrant communities' strengths?

- Phase III: Discussion and Recommendations

Armed with this information, HSAC members identified key findings, and developed recommendations for possible county action.

Phase I: Facts About Immigration: Questions and Answers

1) What is an immigrant? What is the difference between an immigrant and a refugee?

HSAC learned from the local office of the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) that the term immigrant is best thought of as synonymous with foreign-born resident. Immigrant describes anyone born in another country, and living here legally or illegally. Legal immigrants come to the U.S. with government permission most often to join family members who already live here, or under the sponsorship of citizens who have agreed to take financial responsibility for them. Immigrants contribute to the country's cultural and ethnic diversity, but are not synonymous with racial or ethnic heritage. For example, recent U.S. Census information shows that the country's Hispanic population is now the largest of the minority groups. Hispanic peoples could be either native- or foreign-born.

Some legal immigrants fall into the sub-category of refugees. A group gains "refugee" status when the United Nations formally recognizes it as reasonably fearing persecution based on race, religion, nationality, or political opinion. Refugees are forced to leave their countries in the wake of war and so-called ethnic cleansing, and live in camps while they apply to go to the U.S. or other countries.

Patti Hurd of Lutheran Social Services, one of the government-designated refugee resettlement

agencies in Minnesota, told HSAC that unlike immigrants who plan and save money to come here, refugees are under immediate threats, and flee their homes without money, belongings, or official papers. Often they witness, or are victims themselves, of torture and other horrors of war. Life in refugee camps can be brutal and hopeless, she said. HSAC was not surprised to learn from Hurd that refugee resettlement agencies see many people who suffer from post-traumatic stress.

Refugees make up a visible component of immigrants, but account for only about seven percent of all immigrants who enter the U.S. each year. Hurd told HSAC that there are 14 million people in refugee camps around the world, and the U.S., in normal times, takes in about 70,000 per year. Of course, times have changed. Hurd said that refugee resettlement programs are all being hit hard by the federal government's restrictive post-September 11 policies. In 2002, only about 28,000 refugees were admitted into the U.S., she said. Hurd's agency had expected to resettle 680 refugees in Minnesota during the year, but actually served only 176."¹

Illegal immigrants either come to the United States through illegal means, or stay after their visas have expired. Until September 2001, concern about illegal immigrants centered on people from Mexico and Central American countries that cross the border for jobs. Now, however, the focus has been on people who may be terrorists.

¹ Communication with Patti Hurd 1/23/03. Refugees are an important source of immigrants for Minnesota, accounting for about 40% of all immigrants between 1980 and 2000.

Conclusion: HSAC believes all citizens should understand some basic information about immigration policy, particularly as the media and public discussion relates immigrants to terrorism. People should know that most immigrants come here to be with family. They should understand how civil wars around the world and the refugees they produce could impact something as close to home as their children's classrooms.

2) How many immigrants live in Dakota County? How does Dakota County compare with Minnesota and the rest of the country?

There are approximately 18,000 foreign-born residents in Dakota County according to the 2000 Census. Foreign-born residents make up about five percent of the county's population, comparable to that of the rest of Minnesota, but only about half the proportion of the rest of the country.

Dakota County's immigrant population growth rate was much higher than its overall growth rate in the decade between 1990 and 2000. Table B summarizes this growth.

The Census Bureau estimates that immigrants and their American-born offspring accounted for 70% of the U.S. population growth between 1990 and 2000. In fact, if immigrants and their families are removed from the equation, the Census Bureau estimates that the largest states would have lost population in the 2000 Census. Some researchers estimate that, based on current immigration policy and reproductive trends,

immigrants, as a percentage of the U.S. population will peak in 2030 at about 14%.²

For all of the attention to the growth in the number of immigrants, it is useful to add another perspective about the size of the immigrant population. HSAC learned from Joel Wurl of the University of Minnesota Immigration History Research Center that at the height of the European migrations in 1900, 29% of Minnesota's population was foreign-born, vs. about five percent today.

Conclusion: HSAC concludes that historical and national perspectives provide important context for today's immigration discussions. Immigrants and their families fueled the U.S. population growth over the last decade. For people interested in growth and development, this is important information. California, for example, likely gained U.S. Congressional seats on the strength of immigrants.

Immigrants account for 5.5% of all eligible voters nationally – this despite the fact that only 37% of all immigrants have been naturalized and are eligible to vote. There is a huge potential voting bloc as more immigrants gain citizenship.

² Fix, Michael; Passel, Jeffrey; Enchautegui, Maria; Zimmerman, Wendy. "Immigration and Immigrants: Setting the Record Straight," Urban Institute May 1994

**Table A: Number of Foreign-Born
(2000 Census)**

	Dakota County	Minnesota	United States
Total population	355,904	4,919,429	281,421,906
Foreign-born	18,049 (5% of total)	260,463 (5.3% of total)	31,107,889 (11% of total)

Source: U.S. Census 2000 PCT 19

**Table B: Foreign Born Dakota County
Residents 1990-2000**

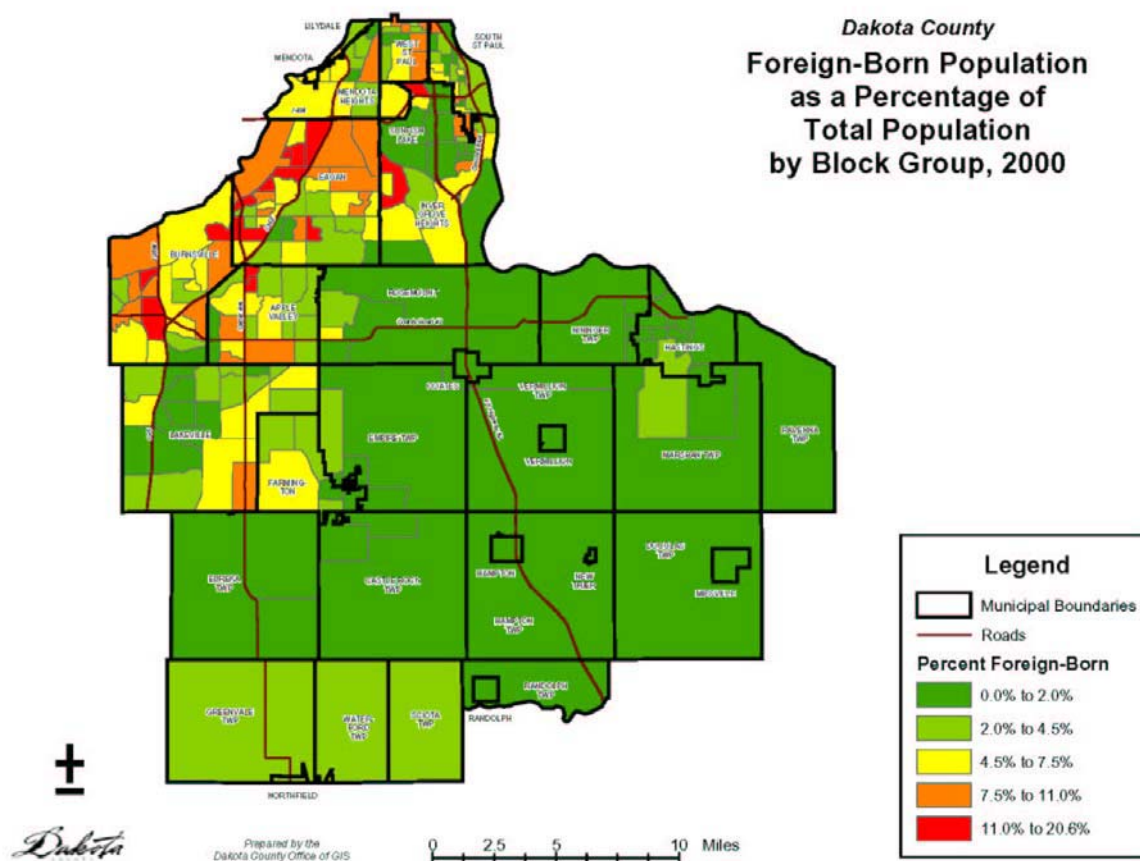
	1990	2000	% Change
Total Population	275,227	355,904	+29.3%
Foreign Born	6,270 (2.27 % of total)	18,049 (5% of total)	+187.8%

Source: Calculated from U.S. Census 2000

3) Where do immigrants live in Dakota County?

The Dakota County Diversity Databook (February 2002) pointed out, "Diversity is not evenly spread across the metro or across Dakota County." The Databook focused on racial and ethnic diversity, but the same can be said of foreign-born residents. They live primarily in the largest cities: Burnsville and Eagan have the largest numbers, followed by Apple Valley, Inver Grove Heights and Lakeville. Figure A below shows where foreign-born populations live based on data from census block group from the 2000 Census.

Figure A



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Table C shows the 2000 Census data for foreign-born residents by city of residence.

Attachment C includes maps produced by the Dakota County Geographic Information System staff illustrating where selected foreign born populations live in Dakota County.

Conclusion: Judging by the map in Figure A, HSAC concludes that a large portion of foreign-born residents live in apartment buildings along the Interstate 35W and 35E corridors, with concentrations in Burnsville and Eagan.

As Dakota County plans for delivering services to clients, it is important to know where potential clients are clustered. This information may also be useful to immigrant advocacy groups and other service providers.

Table C: Foreign-born residents Dakota County City of Residence

	2000 Total population	2000 Total foreign-born population	Foreign-born as a percent of total
Apple Valley	45,427	2,474	5.4%
Burnsville	60,148	4,434	7.3%
Eagan	63,629	4,874	7.6%
Farmington	12,474	330	2.6%
Hastings	18,202	276	1.5%
Inver Grove Heights	29,724	1,298	4.3%
Lakeville	43,128	1,295	3%
Mendota Heights	11,356	437	3.8%
Rosemount	14,615	368	2.5%
South St. Paul	20,192	781	3.8%
West St. Paul	19,405	1,150	5.9%

4) Why do immigrants come to Minnesota and to Dakota County?

HSAC learned that Minnesota has not traditionally been the first destination choice for immigrants. Wurl, of the Immigration History Research Center, told HSAC that the first large groups of immigrants (1830-1860) were part of a wave of secondary migration from large eastern cities and from Canada to farmland in the west. A second, much smaller wave came to work in lumber and iron ore industries between 1880 and 1917.

Wurl spoke about “chain migration”, in which a small number of immigrants got established and then convinced others to join them. The established immigrants helped to support their new neighbors. This phenomenon is still powerful today. Wilder Research Center, in its “Speaking for Themselves” report on survey results of metro area immigrants found that, “Family is the number one reason why most people move to the United States. Once a spouse or a close relative has moved here, the family often tries to get back together as soon as possible...Overall, Twin Cities immigrants name family (71%) and employment (45%) as the top reasons for wanting to come to the United States.”³

Curtis Aljets of the local office of the INS reinforced the chain migration notion. He told HSAC that immigrants today come mainly to join family members already established here. Others qualify for the employment preference category – and they will eventually bring their families.

³ Wilder Research Center, “Speaking for Themselves: A Survey of Hispanic, Hmong, Russian and Somali immigrants in Minneapolis-Saint Paul. November 2000.

As the United States Department of Commerce noted, immigrants usually settle first near where they entered the country, typically in California, New York, Texas, Florida, New Jersey and Illinois, living in the largest metro areas. However, as the Urban Institute pointed out in its study, “Immigrants: Setting the Record Straight,” “Even such traditionally ‘non-immigrant’ states such as Georgia, North Carolina and Minnesota have over 100,000 foreign born residents, half of whom entered in the last decade.”⁴

HSAC members, in conversations with immigrants and refugees themselves, learned that most immigrants came first to Minneapolis to be with friends and family members already established here. Those who moved from Minneapolis to Dakota County again followed friends and family seeking what so many others have sought: open spaces, perceptions of better school and safer, housing than they had Minneapolis. Some believed it would be easier to use Section 8 housing certificates in Dakota County.

Refugees represent an important source of foreign-born residents for Minnesota and Dakota County. Approximately 40% of immigrants to Dakota County in the last twenty years were refugees – a much higher percentage than other states experienced over the same time period. The reason Minnesota has seen so many refugees could be due in part to its history of taking refugees in. Wurl told HSAC that the post-World War II Citizens Committee to Aid Displaced Persons was the genesis for much of Minnesota’s refugee resettlement infrastructure. The INS’ Aljets pointed to the strength of the

⁴ Fix, et al. “Immigrants and Immigration.”

federally designated refugee resettlement non-government organizations that work in Minnesota:

- Catholic Charities
- International Institute of Minnesota
- Jewish Family Services
- Jewish Family and Children's Services
- Lutheran Social Services of Minnesota
- Minnesota Council of Churches
- World Relief of Minnesota

Some immigrants told HSAC members that they hope to go home some day. Some Latino immigrants from Mexico spoke hopefully of saving money to buy property in Mexico someday. Several Somali women, overwhelmed by the challenges of life in the U.S., said they long to return home, despite the dangers there. HSAC's anecdotal findings were in line with the Wilder survey of immigrants, which found that 46% hope to return to their homelands.⁵ Wurl said that historically, about one-third of immigrants (excluding refugees) eventually return home permanently.

Conclusion: Dakota County can predict new immigrants will come to its cities following their friends and families. This information should help the county and other service providers' plans for services. Further, immigrants who establish themselves in Dakota County provide important services to friends and family who follow them. Government should consider ways to support their efforts.

5) Do immigrants use a disproportionate amount of public resources such as

⁵ Wilder, "Speaking for Themselves."

TANF/MFIP, Medicaid/Medical Assistance and public education?

Overall, 17% of immigrants have low incomes vs. 11% of people who were born here.⁶ Citing Census data, the Center for Immigration Studies and the Urban Institute both point out that in a given year, foreign-born residents are 50% more likely than those born in the U.S. to have low incomes. Further, immigrants and their native-born children account for just over one-fourth of all people in poverty. Immigrants account for about 11% of the U.S. population, but represent 14.7% of those in poverty. It should be noted, however, that immigrants who have been in this country longer are less likely to have low incomes than recent immigrants. About 10% of immigrants who have been in this country for at least 20 years have poverty level incomes. On the other hand, 23.5% of those who arrived here in the 1990s have poverty level incomes.⁷

About 15% of traditional welfare recipients were immigrants— this before the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (popularly known as Welfare Reform) limited immigrants' access to TANF. As it enacted Welfare Reform, Congress believed that the country could save about 40% welfare costs by restricting access to cash benefits with this legislation. There is no definitive information on whether these savings were realized. ⁸

⁶ Comarota, Steven. "Immigrants in the United States: A Snapshot of America's Foreign-Born Population. Center for Immigration Studies, January 2001.

⁷ Census Bureau "Profile of the Foreign-Born Population in the United States 2000." 12/01

⁸ Fix, Michael; Passel, Jeffrey. "The Scope and Impact of Welfare Reform's Immigrant Provisions." Urban Institute, 2002.

HSAC learned that Welfare Reform tied eligibility for cash grants to citizenship status. And indeed, immigrant use of all major public assistance programs decreased so that by 1999, the percent of immigrants using TANF and Food Stamps was lower than that of native-born populations.⁹

Conclusion: There is some conflicting evidence about immigrants' use of public assistance. The 1996 Welfare Reform legislation and immigrant legislation that followed have made it very difficult for new immigrants including refugees to receive TANF cash grants. Meanwhile, when TANF caseloads hit their lowest point, immigrants (those who entered the U.S. before 1996 and are therefore still eligible for TANF) appear to be over represented among recipients left on the program, along with people with disabilities. HSAC concludes that to become successfully employed in living wage jobs -- like other special needs populations left on in TANF-- immigrants need tailored and long-term assistance.

6) Do immigrants take jobs away from Native Born Residents?

There is very little local data available on this topic, so HSAC had to rely on national studies. HSAC found this very contentious issue has advocates on both sides presenting conflicting information.

On one hand, immigrants are more likely than native-born citizens to have less than a high school education (33% vs. 13.4%).¹⁰ Some

believe that employers who hire low skilled workers are more likely to employ these immigrants because they are less likely to demand higher wages.

On the Other hand, the Urban Institute concluded that immigrants also contribute so much to the economy that they probably, on balance, create more jobs than they take.¹¹

"Contrary to the public's perception, when all levels of government are considered together, immigrants generate significantly more in taxes paid than they cost in services received."

The Urban Institute continued, "This surplus is unevenly distributed among different levels of government, however, with immigrants (and natives) generating a net surplus to the federal government, but a net cost to some states and most localities."¹²

The Rand Corporation considered immigrants' impact on the California economy in its 2002 study "New Immigrants, New Needs: California's Experience." Study authors found that employers benefit from the presence of immigrants because they are willing to work for lower wages than native-born citizens. However, "...size of current immigrant flows -- and the disproportionate share of poorly educated immigrants they contain -- combined with changes in the state's economy has increased the costs of immigration to the state's public sector and to some native workers."¹³

⁹ Fix; Passel.

¹⁰ Census Bureau, "Profile of the Foreign Born."

¹¹ Fix, Michael; Passel, Jeffrey; Enchautegui, Maria, Zimmermann, Wendy. "Immigration and Immigrants: Setting the Record Straight." Urban Institute May 1994.

¹² Fix et al.

¹³ Rand. The study pointed out that in the 1950s, half of all immigrants in California were from Europe and were well educated. By 1980, less than 10% were from Europe.

The Greater Twin Cities United Way's Immigrants and the Economy Report (June 2002) also tackled these questions. GTUW analyzed national studies and concluded that even locally immigrants create more jobs than they fill. Also, younger immigrants are more likely over their lives to be net contributors to government and society than older immigrants because they are more likely to be better educated and have better jobs.

Some point to immigrants' reputation for entrepreneurship as a response to the issue of jobs. Indeed, Somali immigrants told HSAC that Somalis have a tradition of owning small businesses, something that many hope to do in Dakota County. Nationally, it appears that immigrants in general have about the same rate of entrepreneurship as native-born citizens. When broken down into different ethnic/national groups, it looks as immigrants from Poland, China, Korea, and Canada are more likely those native born residents to have their own businesses.¹⁴

Conclusion: Do immigrants take jobs and cost money? It seems to depend on one's point of view. In rough economic times there is great competition for low skilled jobs. Immigrants may be more willing to take lower wages for such jobs than native-born workers. But immigrants also spend their money, probably allowing businesses to hire staff to meet demand.

This is an old question, one that reverberates louder in difficult economic times. The answer seems to be that there is no clear answer.

7) What does Dakota County do for immigrants already?

All Dakota County departments have Limited English Proficiency (LEP) Plans in accordance with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. One key component of all LEP plans is that interpreters are offered to people to ensure access to services. Immigrants also receive other services as described below:

1. Employment and Economic Assistance (EEA). HSAC learned that immigrants are eligible for public assistance and other services depending their immigration status. Refugees, for example, can qualify for the Refugee Cash and Medical Assistance program for up to eight months from the date of entry into this country. Other immigrants are categorized into three groups: Lawful Permanent Residents (LPR), Non-immigrants (those with visitor and student visas) and undocumented people. LPR's who were sponsored by family members to gain entry into the US, must provide proof of sponsors' incomes and assets when applying for cash and medical assistance. Non-immigrants and those here illegally do not qualify for ongoing cash or medical assistance. They may qualify for emergency medical assistance if they meet criteria including state residency. EEA also makes extensive use of interpreters and distributes information in several languages. EEA's Immigration and Citizenship Experts (ICE) committee works closely with the INS

¹⁴ CPS, Center for Immigration Studies

and the Minnesota Department of Human Services to interpret and implement policies.

2. **Extension Services.** Educators offer immigrants the same services they offer to other residents, though the services are tailored to immigrants' needs. Extension's services include programs on nutrition (i.e. special dietary considerations), budgeting and home safety are sometimes delivered in groups, sometimes in families' homes. Several of Extension's educators are bilingual, though the demand for their time is growing too fast to manage.
3. **Public Health.** Public Health Nurses (PHNS) offer the same services to immigrants that others receive. PHNs use interpreters as well as bilingual speakers on staff. The Public Health Department is in the midst of a department-wide assessment on cross-cultural sensitivity and plans to implement proposals from that effort in 2003. Meanwhile, the Public Health Department continues to train staff on cultural considerations.
4. **Social Services.** Social workers offer the same spectrum of services to eligible immigrants as to eligible native-born populations. The services are tailored to fit immigrants' cultural issues as much as possible, including attempts to provide bilingual/bicultural foster care. Social Services encourage staff to attend workshops to improve abilities to work with clients from different cultures. The topics of some of these workshops include ethnographic interviewing, cultural

competency, and cross-cultural communication. Social Services has a variety of materials translated into different languages.

5. **Other County efforts:** The Public Service and Revenue Division has aggressively pursued staff training including language classes to accommodate immigrants who contact or visit the service windows. The Library has also led efforts to provide multi-lingual materials. Finally, Dakota County's four major buildings are outfitted with signs and brochures in Spanish, Russian, Somali and Vietnamese.¹⁵

Conclusion. Dakota County is to be commended for taking action to accommodate immigrants, and while staff is proud of the efforts, some members expressed concerns about not having interpreters when and where they need them.

¹⁵ Dakota County Board Administration, Finance and Policy Committee RBA 1/8/02.

Phase II: Faces of Immigrants: What are immigrants' major challenges?

Immigrants with whom HSAC spoke talked candidly about the challenges they face. This section discusses those issues in order of importance.

Table D: English Proficiency by Language Spoken at Home

Language spoken at home	Dakota County		Minnesota		United States	
	#, % of total population	% Speak English "very well"	#, % of total population	% Speak English "very well"	#, % of total population	% Speak English "very well"
Spanish	8,499 – 2.6% of pop.	60%	132,066 – 2.9% of pop	62%	28.1 mil. – 11% total pop	51%
Asian-Pacific Isl.	6,277 – 2% of pop.	50%	99,635 – 2.2% of pop	52%	6.9 mil. – 2.65% of pop	48%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Table P19, Census 2000 Summary File 3

Challenge: Limited English Proficiency.

Immigrants' inability to speak English affects every aspect of their lives, from dealing with the government/law enforcement to finding a place to live, to interacting with their children's schools.

Everyone HSAC spoke to, every piece of information HSAC saw, hammered home this point: immigrants' abilities to succeed depend on their English proficiencies. According to the 2000 Census, about 25,000 Dakota County residents over age five speak a language other than English at home. Spanish is the most common language,

spoken by about 8,500 residents. Sixty percent of these residents report being able to speak English 'very well,' Table D summarizes the language picture for immigrants.

Wilder's survey of immigrants had similar findings, and included a third group of interest to HSAC – Somalis. Among this group, three-quarters reported being able to read and understand a newspaper.¹

Looking at English proficiency another way, it appears that some school districts have larger shares of students who speak a “home language” other than English. Table E shows the percentage of children by district who speak a language other than English.

Table E: Percentage of Students who Speak a Language Other than English by School District

School District	% of students who speak a language other than English
District 6—South St. Paul	6%
District 191—Burnsville	11%
District 192—Farmington	3%
District 194—Lakeville	1%
District 195--Randolph	<1%
District 196—Rosemount, Apple Valley, Eagan	6%
District 197—West St. Paul, Mendota Heights, Eagan	8%
District 199—Inver Grove	4%
District 200—Hastings	<1%
District 917—Intermediate School District	<1%
Total Percentage for All Districts	5%

Source: Minnesota Department of Children, Families and

Table F: Ten Most Frequent Languages Spoken by Children in Grades K-12 in all Districts in Dakota County in 2001-2002

Language	Number of Children
English	68, 512
Spanish	1,013
Vietnamese	401
Russian	327
Somali	315
Cambodian	251
Hmong	222
Laotian	214
Chinese	210
African	119

Source: Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning

Latinos who talked to HSAC said that their friends who speak only Spanish usually end up working for low wages. They are often forced to work two or three jobs to make ends meet. One told HSAC that if Latino immigrants want better jobs, they have to learn English. For those who do not have technical skills, this also means going to school. The prospect of learning English and technical skills is daunting, and is made even more difficult when the person is working multiple jobs and participating in family life.

One Russian immigrant who is an advocate for others told HSAC that Russians worry most about not understanding or being understood when they speak. Many are highly educated and are humiliated by not being able to accomplish basic tasks because of their limited English skills.

- **Challenge: Confusion About Parenting and Discipline**

Americans expect adolescents to have conflicts with their parents. But immigrants with whom HSAC spoke were shocked that children – especially their children – would disobey their parents. “This is unimaginable in my country,” one Somali man said. Khambay Sivongsay, who works with one of the school districts, confirmed that immigrant children are different from their predecessors and their homeland. Immigrants and their children – some of whom are immigrants themselves -- struggle with more than just intergenerational issues. They are also dealing with changing cultural and family norms and mores, she said.

For example, Somali immigrants told HSAC that children in Somalia would never dream of

challenging their parents. But in the U.S., Somali parents – particularly those who cannot speak English – find themselves at the mercy of their English-speaking and misbehaving offspring. One woman said that her children told her they would report her for abuse when she tried to discipline them. They told her that the police would take them away. “We get afraid. We don’t know. Are they going to take away our kids?” she wondered. Other Somali parents said they were amazed by how much freedom children have in the U.S. that it seemed they did not have to be with their families.

Latino parents expressed similar concerns. Several described for HSAC feeling alone when their children began defying them. As with the Somalis, some of these mothers described fearing that attempts to discipline their children would get them into trouble with the child protection system. One parent cried as she described her struggles with her teenage son. She said, “He’s hanging out with a bad crowd and is becoming distant from the family and the culture. What can I do? Is there anyone in Dakota County who could help my son? What will child protection do if I try to discipline my son?” she asked. Because she cannot speak English, she worried that Child Protection staff will not understand her.

- **Challenge: Fear and Mistrust of Government and Other Kinds of Authority.**

Immigrants told HSAC that many of them fear government in all of its forms, from school principal to INS agent. One Somali man said that because Somalia has been in civil war for more than a decade, there is no tradition of a single

government. A Somali woman said that Somalis assume that government is trying to rob them of their money. “They don’t understand that if you pay your taxes, then there are services,” she explained. But Somalis fear complaining, or even asking questions sometimes because they believe that they will jeopardize their relatives’ chances of getting out of refugee camps. The local Somali community continues to be deeply influenced by the incident in Minneapolis in 2002, in which police shot a mentally ill Somali man wielding a machete.

Mexican immigrants, some of who are here illegally, worry that drawing attention to themselves will also bring the attention of the FBI and the INS, and eventually deportation. Russians immigrants are not so mistrustful as afraid that they will violate a rule or a law.

- **Challenge: Feeling Out of Their Depth When Dealing with Schools**

All of the immigrants with whom HSAC spoke liked the schools their children attend, but also felt overwhelmed. The immigrants told HSAC some schools have bilingual consultants or diversity coordinators, people who made things easier for them.

One such bilingual consultant working for a school district is herself an immigrant from Cambodia. She had assumed that she would have a lot of contact with Asian families. But she was surprised and pleased to find that all kinds of immigrant families seek her out. Other immigrant parents believe she can understand their experiences and struggles even if she does not understand their languages, she told HSAC.

“High school is difficult for immigrant families. The parents, they often can’t help their children with high school level homework and children feel the pressure of living between two different cultures.” she said. “This creates a lot of stress for the children and the parents.”

Things can get further muddled, she said, if parents cannot speak English, but their children can. What is the incentive for an adolescent who has been in trouble at school to interpret messages from school to his/her parents?

Sometimes the issue is trying to find the best educational fit for immigrant children. Younger children easily catch up with their peers in class. But older children sometimes have more trouble. One woman explained that when Somali children arrive in the U.S. they are put in a grade according to their age. “But remember,” she said, “nothing has been working in Somalia for a long time. No schools. So they come here and the school puts a 15 year old into high school, even though he hasn’t been to school since the third grade.”

- **Challenge: I’m here. Now what do I do?**

HSAC learned from Patti Hurd (Lutheran Social Services – Refugee Resettlement) and Carl Nelson (World Relief – Refugee Resettlement) that refugees sometimes get off planes at the Minneapolis-St. Paul airport in January without coats, sometimes wearing sandals and light clothing of Africa or Asia. Refugee resettlement agencies gives each immigrant \$400 (grant funds from the federal government), connect immigrants with relatives, and then work with them for 90 days

to help them enroll their children in school, and set up plans for finding work and housing. The expectation is that refugees live with relatives until they can find their own places. Relatives will teach refugees to “navigate the little things” as Hurd put it, such as how to use a kitchen disposal. “They just want to figure out how to get by,” said Hurd.

Khan Kong of the United Cambodian Association of Minnesota (UCAM) told HSAC he sees getting transportation as another top priority for immigrants. “I say, ‘learn to drive immediately,’” he explained. If immigrants can get around, then they will be able to find jobs and apartments, he said. Hurd from Lutheran Social Services concurred, but added that refugees don’t have money to buy cars and, in many areas, there is no good public transportation.

Immigrants who cannot easily get around have limited access to employment opportunities, and ESL classes, one immigrant said, “It makes it difficult to know the possibilities.”

Immigrants experience the same affordable housing problems familiar to other residents. Kong of UCAM said that affordable housing is the top problem for his clients. “If you make \$7 an hour, how can you afford someplace for you and your five or six kids?” Hurd agreed, and added that Somali families coming to Minnesota are very large and it is not uncommon to have to split them up at least temporarily so they can find shelter.

Once they have places to live, the next step is to find work. Refugees can get employment assistance from the five refugee resettlement agencies in the metro area, Nelson told HSAC. These programs

augment, in part, county employment and training programs. The refugees get help with putting together resumes, learning how to interview for jobs and finding out how to locate job openings. They can also get some limited job coaching. “It’s hard, but refugees are resourceful and diligent,” Nelson said. Jacob Mankovich from the Jewish Community Center in St. Paul said that Russian refugees very much want to be self-sufficient. He explained that they need community support to succeed. “They need encouragement. They need to believe in themselves. Many Russian immigrants come to the Jewish Community Center in St. Paul for help. They don’t want help in the form of charity. They want to be given opportunities to succeed.”

Mutual support is an important value to many immigrant families and communities. Somali immigrants, for example, rely on family, friends, children, and neighbors help each other with job applications, reading mail, grocery shopping, transportation, and finding housing. There is no such thing as homelessness in Somalia, said one woman, because friends and family take people in if they have no place to live. Somali immigrants told HSAC that they compensate for the limited public transportation in Dakota County by living close to one another so that they can help each other. If 100 Somalis live in one apartment complex, one woman said, ten would have cars and provide transportation to the others.

Hurd told HSAC that not all refugees understand that both men and women have jobs in America. “We tell them, lots of people tell them, but I’m afraid it isn’t always clear,” she said.

Once they’ve settled, it isn’t unusual, HSAC learned, for immigrants to juggle two or three jobs or to work 10-15 hours every day to support their families. Immigrants with whom HSAC spoke said that schedules like these leave little time for English as a Second Language (ESL) classes or recreation. Without English proficiency, so many opportunities are difficult to access. Language and cultural barriers make finding employment difficult, especially for women and older immigrants.

Some immigrants told HSAC that they want to have their own businesses. A group of Somali women talked about home-based sewing businesses, but they had no money to buy sewing machines or supplies to get off the ground. Further, they seemed to have little idea of what it would take to run a business in the U.S.

- **Challenge: Mental Health and Depression**

Part of health, as HSAC learned in its last study, is mental health. All of the immigrant groups described stress and depression among people they know. Wondered Russian immigrant and resettlement worker Mankovich, “isn’t that the usual thing for immigrants?”

Massive life changes, removing most of their control, being away from friends and familiar things – it is no wonder that immigrants seem to suffer higher rates of depression, he said.

“People often don’t identify what they are feeling as depression. They will identify the symptoms but won’t label it depression,” Mankovich explained

“Older people are depressed because they are missing respect—respect that came from professional accomplishments or maybe military service.” He said that anyone who works with Russian immigrants must consider depression as a factor.

Depression also affects Southeast Asian elders, parents, and children. Many of these immigrants lived through war, and then made heroic journeys to escape to refugee camps. Sometimes they spent years in the crowded camps waiting for sponsors in the U.S. During all of this turmoil, families were separated, countries were torn apart, and people’s lives were disrupted. Refugees and immigrants carry the emotional scars of these experiences.

- **Challenge: Dealing with Racism and Xenophobia.**

The immigrants HSAC spoke with talked about wanting to fit in, to make lives for themselves and their families. But their skin colors, clothing and language differences, they believe, set them apart and make them targets for racists and xenophobes. The Somali immigrants said that after September 11, 2001 and the attention to the role of Islam in the terror attacks, they noticed more people glaring at them and treating them badly. Somalis are mainly Muslim, and believed they bore the brunt of Minnesotans’ anger and fear related to the attacks. Latinos told HSAC that they experience racism, too. One community representative said, “Our skin is just brown enough...”

Conclusion: We take it for granted that people will read signs at the store, on the road, in physicians’ offices, at school. We spend a lot of time and money producing handouts and brochures to answer basic questions. Signs and printed materials are efficient ways to convey a lot of information to large numbers of people.

Language barriers persist making it difficult for immigrants and refugees to navigate complex government systems, such as the Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS). And what about school districts such as ISD #196 (Rosemount-Eagan-Apple Valley) where there are 53 different languages spoken among the student population?¹⁶ Signs and printed materials become unmanageable. And this does not even touch the many immigrants who are not literate in their own languages.

HSAC members came back again and again to immigrants’ English proficiency. The traditional expectation has been that immigrants will assimilate. But being unable to speak English makes assimilation difficult. There are English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, but immigrants told HSAC that these classes often do not fit their situations. Either the classes are not intensive enough as some immigrants said, or they take too long as other said.

HSAC concludes that English proficiency is the key for immigrants to participate fully in community life. HSAC sees the need for more and more varied opportunities for immigrants to learn English. Though providing ESL has not traditionally been a function of county government, HSAC believes that

¹⁶ Heidi Welsch, OPED – presentation to HSAC on March 19, 2002. Data taken from Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning 2000-2001 School Year.

Dakota County should consider how it could support ESL. HSAC believes that with improved English proficiency, many of the other challenges outlined by immigrants in this report will begin to resolve themselves.

Community Strengths – Some Things to Build On

HSAC recognizes immigrant communities have significant strengths that could figure into how Dakota County Community Services works with them. HSAC identified three key strengths:

- ***Immigrant communities are highly networked.*** They have recognized leaders and can spread information quickly and efficiently. The important thing is to identify and establish relationships with these leaders, and to take their advice on working with their communities.
- ***Immigrants have traditions of mutual aid.*** The immigrant groups in this study also have strong advocacy and mutual aid associations. Latinos have, for example, Neighborhood House and HACER. Russians have the St. Paul Jewish Community Center. Asian people have a number of groups, including United Cambodian Association Minnesota, Lao Assistance Center of Minnesota and many others. HSAC learned that informal groups at apartment complexes and among close-knit communities step in when their neighbors and friends are in need.

- ***Immigrants have characteristics that Americans traditionally admire.*** One Lao woman told HSAC that the first wave of refugees includes members of the educated and merchant classes, and that other immigrant include risk takers.

Recommendations

Immigrants have become more visible in Dakota County. For Dakota County Community Services, immigrants represent a growing part of the business. HSAC believes it makes sense for Community Services to take advantage of immigrant communities' strengths to work with them on their challenges.

HSAC also recognizes the current budget realities with these recommendations. They do not call for significant new resources. At the same time, they may mean doing business differently. HSAC believes this is appropriate.

1) Support efforts to increase English proficiency.

That limited English proficiency is a problem is surely not news to anyone who reads this report. HSAC found that there are many laudable efforts by Dakota County staff, school districts and others to help immigrants learn English. HSAC recognizes that school districts have primary responsibility to offer English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, but also heard in its discussions with immigrants that these opportunities are not necessarily compatible with their efforts to support their families. Further, according to ISD 191's (Burnsville-Eagan-Savage) Kevin Avise, Program Manager of Adult Basic Education, there are waiting lists to get into ESL classes. Staff in the other local school districts concur.

HSAC recommends that Dakota County Community Services work with school districts, immigrant community leaders, advocates, and with organizations such as the Minnesota Literacy Council to offer more focused opportunities for immigrants to learn English. HSAC recently learned, for example, of an effort by ISD 191's Avise to create what he calls "Survival English" for English language learners who need English basics right away, but are on the ESL class waiting list. Avise is creating the curriculum, but so far lacks the funds to implement it. Another example of this strategy is in Montgomery County, MD, where health professionals are working with the county to teach immigrants how to describe health concerns in English. This kind of "strategic" ESL could be a model that the county and others could use to create sessions around working with schools, getting and keeping jobs, getting and keeping apartments, asking for help at county offices.

2) Continue to invest in staff that speaks other languages.

Approximately 15-20 Community Services Division staff are fluent in languages other than English. Meanwhile, Dakota County spent approximately \$277,000 on interpreter services in 2002, including the Language Line, a phone interpreter service offering 140 languages seven days per week, 24 hours per day. Departments also contract for individual in-person interpreters.

While there is no countywide policy in place to increase the number of staff who speak languages other than English, Dakota County Employee Relations does provide tuition reimbursement to staff

for approved language classes. HSAC recommends that Dakota County Community Services consider ways to hire immigrants and others who are fluent in the following languages: Spanish, Somali, Hmong, Russian, Vietnamese, Lao, and Cambodian. One way to do this, HSAC believes, is to identify key positions with significant contact with immigrants, and to recruit from among immigrant communities. HSAC recognizes that this will not be easy. Both the Public Health and Social Services Departments have begun some work in this area, but without good results so far. Still, HSAC believes that Community Services should continue these efforts.

3) Help immigrants establish themselves in Dakota County.

HSAC was impressed by the vigor of immigrant communities' formal and informal mutual aid groups and advocacy organizations. HSAC believes that the Dakota County Community Services should support these efforts with small cash grants to trusted community advocacy groups to take on specific tasks with immigrant groups such as the "strategic" ESL described above.

Another way to help immigrants establish themselves would be to have EEA's Workforce Services staff work identify and work with several immigrant owned micro business start ups.

HSAC also recommends that the County work with trusted advocacy groups and local service agencies to produce " Ways to Get Established When You Move to Dakota County," published in

printed, audio, video and in web-based formats, "Get Established" could include topics such as:

- Where to learn to speak English.
- Setting up a household – getting phone and utilities connected, developing good relationships with the landlord and neighbors.
- Getting child to school – where to go to enroll children in schools, getting to know teachers and other school staff, what to expect from school
- Getting a job – where to look for jobs, and where to get help training for/finding jobs. Also establishing relationships with employers, what to expect at work.

4) Most importantly, take advantage of opened lines of communication.

HSAC's work opened lines of communication with four important immigrant communities. It makes sense for Dakota County to build on these efforts. HSAC recommends that Dakota County officials, senior Community Services staff and other key partners (school districts, cities, businesses, non-profit organizations) periodically meet with immigrant community leaders to talk about issues of common interest, including:

- Immigrants' fears of government, and what Dakota County could do to make immigrants' interactions with government less stressful.
- Immigrants' confusion about parent-child conflict, discipline and American expectations.

- Immigrants' interest in making systems work for them, including health care and education.

HSAC imagines that these meetings could prevent misunderstandings, and could help County staff solve problems as they occur.

Dakota County should also take advantage of relationships with immigrant communities to find ways to include immigrants in citizen advisory committees, and to encourage participation in citizen surveys and community forums. Dakota County Public Health Department already provides one example of involving different communities in its Community Health Services Planning process.

Extension Services in Dakota County is also active in networking with communities. HSAC believes that Extension should be tapped to lead these convening and organizing efforts.

This was a new kind of study for HSAC because it began not with a problem but as an open-ended question: What is the status of immigrants in Dakota County? HSAC was able to answer many parts of the question. The important thing, HSAC believes, is not that the question was answered, but that it was asked at all.

Attachments

Attachment A – List of Presenters

Attachment B – Inventory of County services

Attachment C – List of HSAC members

Attachment D – Density of Population Maps

Attachment A

Community leaders, agency representatives, and residents who participated in HSAC meetings from March through November 2002:	
Idil Abdullahi Dakota County Resident	Carl Nelson Minnesota World Relief Office
Zainab Abshir District 191, Dakota Co. Resident	Jacob Mankovich Jewish Community Center – St. Paul
Curtis Aljets Immigration/Naturalization Serv (INS)	Rafael Robert HACER (Hispanic Advocacy and Community Empowerment through Research).
Erin Benitez Chipotle Mexican Grille	Linda Scheller Dakota County Resident
Sunny Chanthanouvong Lao Assistance Center of Minnesota	Khambay Sivongsay Burnsville High School
Gilbert De La O Neighborhood House	Ly Vang Association for the Advancement of Hmong Women
Mohamed Gobana City of Burnsville, Dakota Co. resident	PHOUNINH VIXAYVONG Lao Women Association
Patti Hurd Lutheran Social Services	Joel Wurl University of MN – Immigration Research Center
Khon Kong United Cambodian Association of MN	
Dakota County staff who assisted with the project:	
Gerilyn Courneya Social Services	Nancy Nystuen EEA
Rita Colchin Dakota County Extension Service	Noy Sakulnamarka Extension Services
Jayne Hager Dee Extension Services	Suzanne Sheridan Extension Services
Deb Horner Property Records	Lila Taft Public Health
Mary Lenarz EEA	Heidi Welsch Office of Planning Evaluation, & Development

Attachment B

Summary of Inventory Responses

In October 2002 Community Services Planning staff sent surveys to various Dakota County departments, primarily in the Community Services Division. The surveys addressed the current needs, opportunities, challenges and strengths related to working with and providing services for immigrants and refugees in Dakota County.

The following departments/divisions responded to the survey:

- Public Services & Revenue—Assessing Services
- Public Services & Revenue—Library/Burnhaven
- Community Services—Social Services
- Community Services—E & EA
- Community Services—University of Minnesota Extension Services
- Community Services—Public Health

Summary of Responses:

Question	Responses
What current needs to you see within your department/division in providing services to immigrants and refugees?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most respondents listed interpreting, translation, accessibility of services, literacy, bridging cultural barriers, special dietary needs, and health care education. • Culturally specific and sensitive services such as bilingual foster care. • Need to know where to refer immigrants/refugees.
Does your department/division have other specific needs related to providing services to immigrants?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transportation to get immigrants to services. Extension goes into neighborhoods and schools to teach home safety and nutrition to new immigrants in their neighborhoods or at ESL schools, but even going this far does not ensure immigrants can get to services. Public Health staff spends a lot of time trying to line up transportation to clinics for immigrants on straight MA. PMAP providers pay for transportation, so immigrants on PMAP don't have to worry. • Accommodate growing demand for interpreters. PSRD seeing more non-English speaking customers at the counter and phone contacts, in home during revaluation. (PS & R) Extension staff feels stretched to do interpreting. Public Health seeing more non-English speaking clients, including clients who turn to PHNs when they receive information on public assistance in English, but cannot understand it. • Affordable housing. Public Health staff sees large families getting evicted from apartments because there are too many people in the apartment. • Communication among departments around eligibility and services. PHN pointed out that immigrants getting cut off of MA impacts PHN ability to deliver preventive services. • Local culturally specific services. Most bilingual/bicultural services are based out of Ramsey and Hennepin County. (Social Services). No low cost dental services, subsidized day care, ESL classes and no transportation to get to these services

Question	Responses
What have departments done to train staff about immigrants and cultural sensitivity?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All departments created Limited English Proficiency (LEP) plans, including specifying they will accommodate, among other populations, non-English speakers. • All departments offer culturally based training. Public Health is doing a department-wide assessment on its cultural competence. • Two clerks took division sponsored Spanish classes. (PS & R) • All departments are using or are getting translations of materials
Please rank the following cultural groups in order of level of client contact or need for services.	<p>Most departments/divisions put the groups in roughly this order:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Spanish-Speaking 2. Somali 3. Hmong 4. Russian 5. Vietnamese 6. Laotian 7. Cambodian
Is your department currently administering funds or contracting with community providers to deliver services to immigrant or refugee populations?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extension contracts with Public Health to provide services as part of the Maternal Child Health Program. No interpreter funds are available with this contract. • Minnesota Healthy Beginnings, which provides universal, short-term services to families with new babies who live in Inver Grove Heights, South St. Paul and West St. Paul. Some of the services we provide are delivered by MHB-ECFE home visitors and we do contract for two bilingual, bicultural workers through the grant. The grant funding ends 12/31/03. • We have a contract with culturally specific agencies (Spanish Bilingual/Hispanic) to provide services within the county. • EEA administers the Refugee Cash Assistance program, which is a monthly cash benefit available to eligible refugees for up to 8 months from US entry date. Clients who qualify for RCA also qualify for MA and food support benefits. Also, we have many other immigrants (LPR's or Other Lawfully residing) who receive other cash assistance such as General Assistance, Minnesota Supplemental Aid, MA and Food Support.
<p>Do you have ideas or recommendations for improving service delivery to immigrants and refugees within your department/division?</p> <p>Are there things the County could do to support your efforts in providing services to immigrants and refugees?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Families need to be able to call the department/division and talk with someone even though they do not speak English. (Public Health) • I would not limit recommendations to immigrants/refugees, as there are several LEP clients who are not necessarily in that category. I would look at the cultural/language specific services or cross cultural issues. (Social Services) • Additional bilingual staff. More funding available from a separate fund—not from department budgets—for interpreter services. More trained immigrants used to provide these services. (Extension) • We could advertise our services for refugee health assessments and low-cost immunization services more; such as on Somali and Spanish-Speaking radio stations, at apartment complexes, bulletin boards, at VOLAGs, etc. • County needs much better public transportation services and affordable housing. We also need a contingency fund to pay hospital level of care for uninsured individuals who are a public health threat (i.e. TB)

Question	Responses
<p>What is your department/division's strength related to working with immigrant and refugee clients and communities?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nurses are open and interested in education related to cultural diversity to improve their practice. PHD staff relationships with several skilled Spanish-language interpreters, most of whom are bilingual and bicultural. Offer many services—WIC, family health visiting, child health services, kindergarten services, free immunizations, free TB for all eligible individuals, assistance with change of status, and free infant car seats. We do a holistic assessment of their needs. They come in for immunizations but we assess for other needs—child health screening, refugee health screening, WIC, Child and Teen Check-Ups. • Extension has a diverse workforce with several bilingual people and others with extensive exposure to cultures other than their own. We work with immigrants in their homes. We help families learn and we learn from them. Food is an interesting way to learn about a culture and to become familiar with their cultural habits. Standing around a kitchen is a comfortable place for women—from any culture—to communicate with one another. We help them use WIC food that is provided and help them manage their food stamp dollars. • Libraries provide access to the Internet for the public, materials to help immigrants and refugees as they learn to speak English, immigration and citizenship materials (i.e. citizenship study guides), books written in simplified English for beginning readers, books in Spanish language are displayed separately and are available for check-out. • Division diversity plan and good customer service/relations. (PS & R) • Commitment from the top down to address issues equally across the client base—in an appropriate and sensitive manner. Willingness to learn and bring in specific services as necessary. To provide free interpreters. (Social Services) • Our department has a committee called "Immigration and Citizenship Experts" or ICE. This committee's primary function is to keep up to date on all the immigration rules and changes and to be an expert in helping other financial workers with immigration questions. The committee also issues training guides for new employees to use to ensure correct policy is followed for refugee and immigrant eligibility for public assistance programs. Agency is already doing what it can to deliver benefits to qualifying immigrants -- walk-in intake process every day from 8-10 AM for clients to file applications. Most clients are seen the same day that they come in. In reviewing many of the initial applications for RCA benefits, I have found that most application decisions are made quickly; many approved the same day the client comes in. We have interpreter services available and applications are available in the client's language. (E & EA—Singles Cash—RCA/GA/MSA/MA and Food Support)

Attachment C

Dakota County Human Services Advisory Committee (HSAC) Membership List 2003

Michelle Archer	JoAnn Johnson
Lynn Badje Gerdis	Krystal Kahn
George Bodmer	Patricia McMurray
Jean Brown, <i>Chair</i>	David Miller
Sue Carey	Cynthia Moore
Lois Chambers	Gayle Moxness
Stephen Clark	Daniel Passe, Sr.
Pastor Kearney Frantsen	Mary Rodenberg-Roberts
Sandy Hamel, <i>Vice Chair</i>	Charlotte Shover
Alan Ingram	Michele Stacken

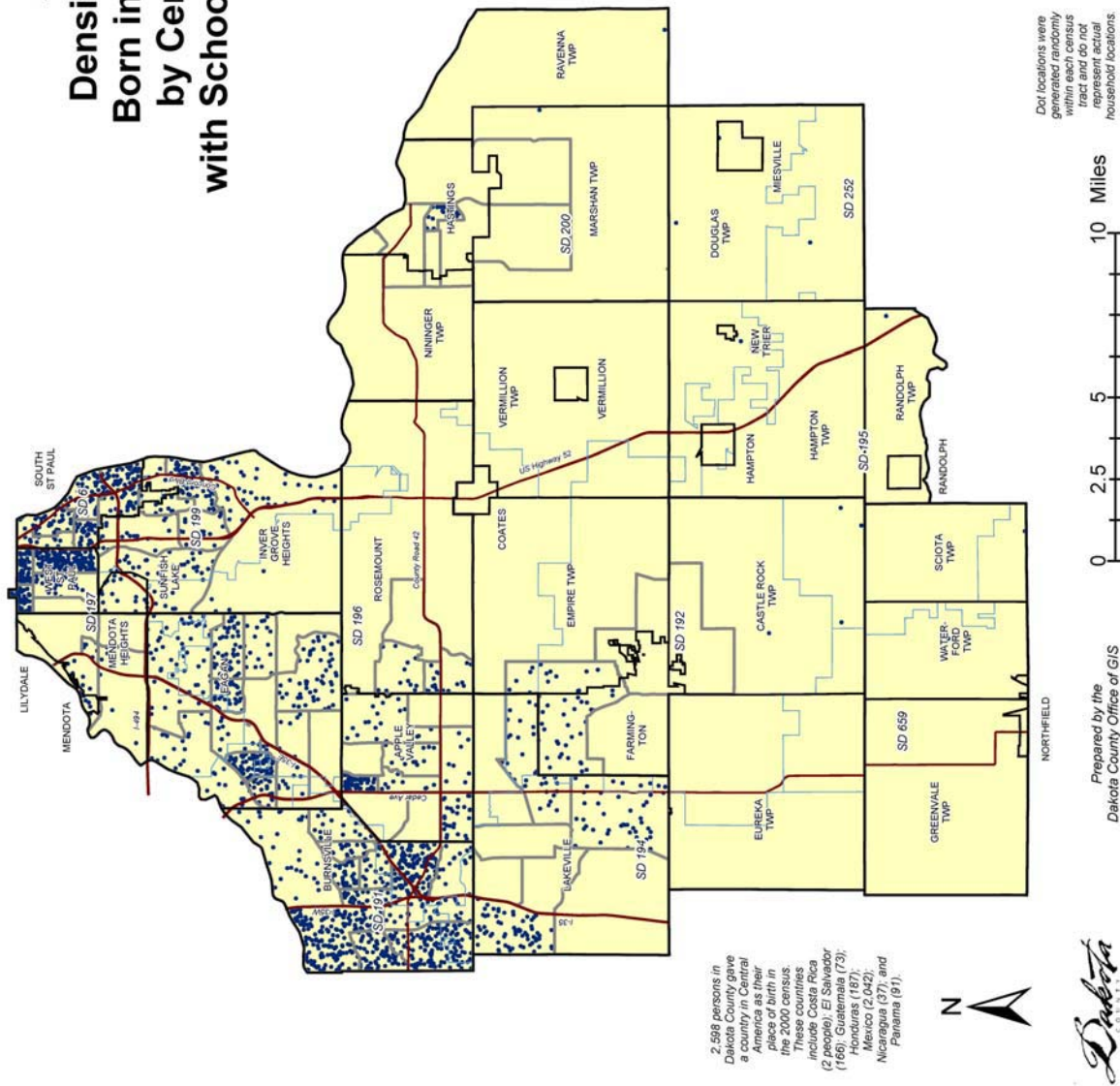
*Staff support: Sandy Rolstad, Emily Schug, Meg Grove
For more information on this report, call (651) 554-5809.*

Dakota County



Dakota County

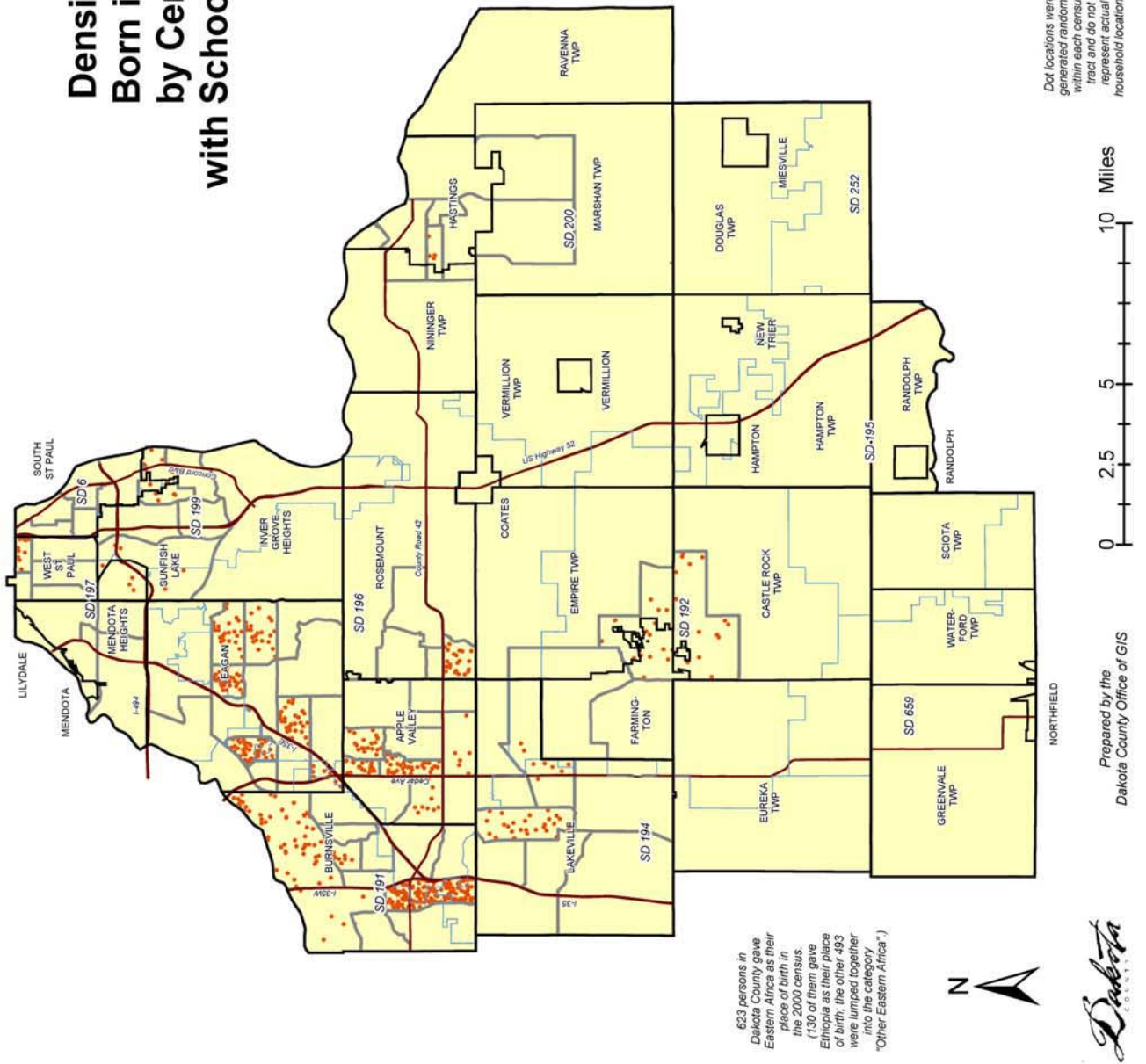
Density of Population Born in Central America by Census Tract, 2000 with School District Boundaries



Dakota County

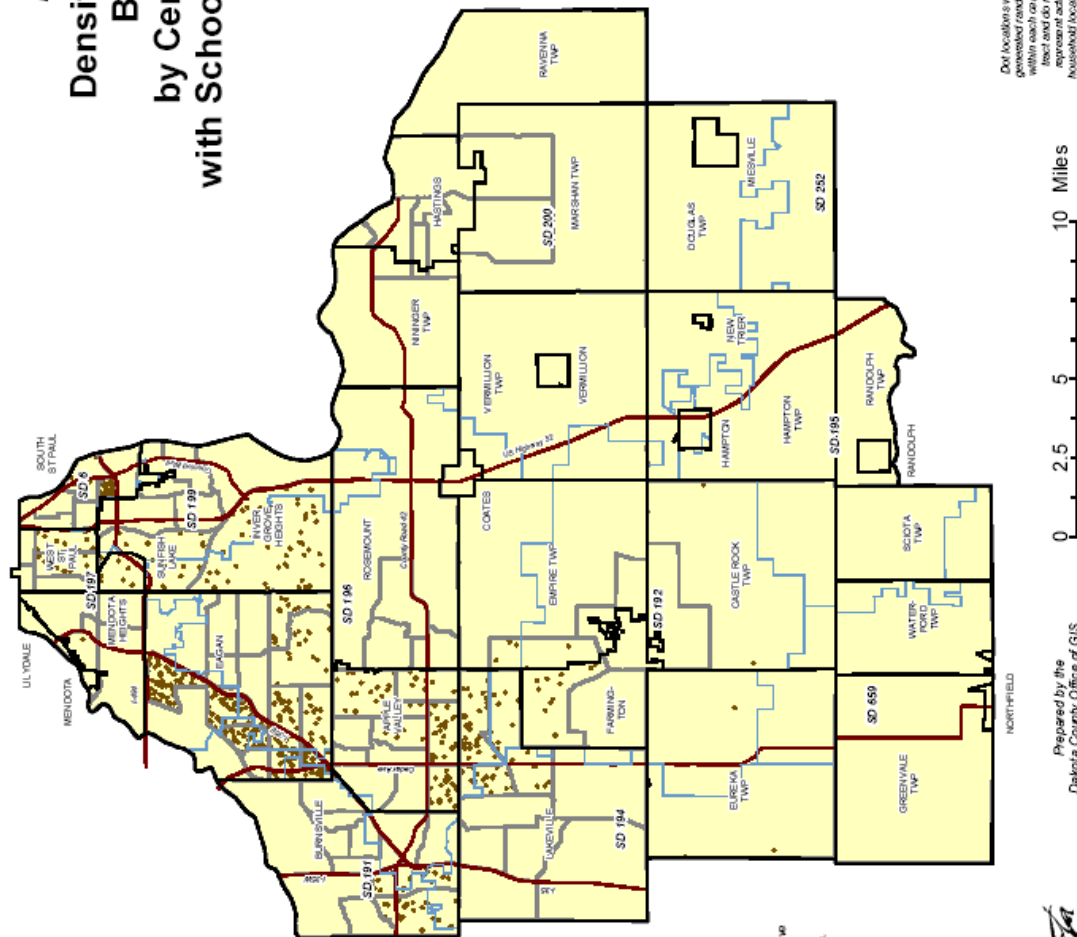
Density of Population Born in Eastern Africa by Census Tract, 2000

with School District Boundaries



Dakota County

Density of Population Born in Laos by Census Tract, 2000 with School District Boundaries



624 persons in
Dakota County live
in Laos as their
place of birth in
the 2000 census.



Prepared by the
Dakota County Office of GIS



Dot locations were
generated randomly
within each census
tract based on the
2000 Census of
Population and
Housing data.

Municipal Boundaries

School District Boundaries

Roads

1 Dot = 1 person

Place of Birth - Laos

Legend

Dakota County

Density of Population Born in Russia by Census Tract, 2000 with School District Boundaries

